



Kim Campbell

POLITICIAN

Holding executive authority is one problem. Building institutions that hold up after the leader leaves is another, and most boards underestimate how different the two are. Senior teams running through democratic backsliding, political risk, and contested succession need leaders who have governed at the top, lost office, and spent the years afterwards thinking seriously about what makes leadership legitimate.

Kim Campbell, Canada's 19th Prime Minister and the first woman to lead the country, helps organisations think rigorously about power, legitimacy, and the formation of leaders capable of governing through pressure.

Kim Campbell's 2026 Biography

Why organisations work with Kim Campbell

- She has held the top job. Few speakers can describe cabinet decision-making, defence policy, and the politics of succession from inside the Prime Minister's office of a G7 country.
- She was the first woman to serve as Defence Minister of any NATO member state, which gives boards a substantive perspective on gender, authority, and security policy that does not collapse into commentary.
- She built a working leadership institution from scratch: the Peter Lougheed Leadership College at the University of Alberta, where she served as Founding Principal from 2014 to 2018.
- She has spent two decades inside the leading global networks for former heads of government and democratic reform, including Club de Madrid, where she was Secretary General, and the World Movement for Democracy, where she chaired the steering committee.
- She is a Companion of the Order of Canada, the country's highest civilian honour, recognising lifetime contribution rather than a single role.

Biography highlights

- 19th Prime Minister of Canada and the first woman to hold the office.
- First woman to serve as Defence Minister of any NATO member state.
- Former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada; passed reforms to gun control and the law of sexual assault.
- Canadian Consul General in Los Angeles, 1996 to 2000.
- Taught at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2001 to 2004.
- Founding Principal, Peter Lougheed Leadership College, University of Alberta, 2014 to 2018.
- Secretary General of Club de Madrid, 2004 to 2006; founding member

AVAILABLE FOR

- After Dinner Engagement
- Panel Participation
- Speaking

KIM'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Climate Action and Sustainability
- Executive Development
- Geopolitics
- Leadership
- Political Risk & Policy

LANGUAGES: English

of the organisation.

- Chair, Council of Women World Leaders, 1999 to 2003. President, International Women's Forum, 2003 to 2005.
- Companion of the Order of Canada (2008); Order of British Columbia (2012).
- Author of *Time and Chance: The Political Memoirs of Canada's First Woman Prime Minister*.

Biography

Most discussions of leadership skip the part that matters most to boards: what happens when authority meets resistance, and the leader is held accountable for the result. Kim Campbell has lived that sequence. She became Canada's 19th Prime Minister in June 1993, lost the autumn election in one of the heaviest defeats in Canadian political history, and then spent the following three decades doing the harder work of building the institutions that produce the next generation of leaders.

Before the premiership she ran two of the most demanding portfolios in any cabinet. As Minister of Justice and Attorney General she carried gun control reform and a substantive overhaul of sexual assault law through Parliament. As Minister of National Defence in 1993 she became the first woman to hold that role in any NATO country, attending the alliance's defence ministers' meetings during a period of rapid post-Cold War repositioning.

The post-government work is what gives her current perspective its weight. She served as Canadian Consul General in Los Angeles, taught at the Harvard Kennedy School from 2001 to 2004, and chaired the Council of Women World Leaders. As a founding member and later Secretary General of Club de Madrid, she sits inside the world's principal network of former heads of government working on democratic reform. She chaired the World Movement for Democracy's steering committee from 2008 to 2015.

Her most concrete recent project is institutional. From 2014 to 2018 she was Founding Principal of the Peter Lougheed Leadership College at the University of Alberta, designing and launching an undergraduate leadership programme intended to compete with the best in the world. She is a Companion of the Order of Canada and a recipient of the Order of British Columbia.

Key speaking topics

- Political leadership and executive decision-making
- Democratic institutions and the conditions for legitimacy
- Gender, authority, and women in political leadership
- Defence and security policy
- Climate change as a governance and stability problem
- Leadership formation and the design of leadership programmes
- Canadian and international politics

Ideal for

- Boards and executive committees stress-testing strategy against political risk
- Government, civil service, and public sector leadership programmes
- Audiences building or sponsoring leadership development institutions
- Conferences on women's leadership where the brief calls for first-hand

executive experience

Audience outcomes

- A first-hand account of how cabinets, central government, and party politics actually decide
- A substantive view on gender and political authority from the first woman to lead a G7 country
- A working framework for what makes leadership legitimate when institutions are under strain
- A grounded read on democratic backsliding from someone who has worked inside the leading reform networks for two decades

Kim Campbell's 2026 talks & topics

Gender and Power

A talk on how gender shapes access to authority and the experience of holding it, drawn from Campbell's own time in office and her teaching at Harvard.

Key takeaways:

- How gender operates at the top of executive politics, not in the abstract
- What changes, and what does not, when women reach senior office
- Practical implications for organisations promoting women into senior leadership

The Culture of Power

A talk on legitimacy, trust, and the cultural conditions that determine who is allowed to lead.

Key takeaways:

- Why legitimacy matters more than mandate when authority is contested
- How cultural assumptions shape who is recognised as a credible leader
- What this means for organisations operating across very different political cultures

We're Already in World War III: The Social and Political Dimensions of Climate Change

A talk reframing climate change as a question of state capacity, security, and governance rather than environmental policy alone.

Key takeaways:

- Why climate stress is already producing political and security consequences
- How weak state capacity compounds environmental shocks

- What governments and organisations can realistically do under those conditions

Creating the Next Generation of Leaders

A talk on leadership formation drawn from Campbell's work designing the Peter Lougheed Leadership College.

Key takeaways:

- What undergraduate leadership education should actually teach
- Lessons from building a leadership institution from scratch
- How organisations can think about pipeline rather than recruitment

Kim Campbell's Videos



What Kim Campbell's clients say

Kim was phenomenal! She really exceeded our expectations for an inspiring speaker. All our guests enjoyed her talk and felt motivated from her responses. The Q&A was very popular, with many women wanting to get their questions answered. During the poster signing, Kim was very personable and kindly took photos with guests. She also stayed for the lunch, and we could not have been happier that she did.

Fund Development & Communications Manager, Bridges for Women Society

Ms. Campbell's talk to the students and women leaders was exceptional. She hit all of the important points and the students were engaged and interested, and the adults in the room were all commenting about how wonderful her presentation was. She had obviously lived the topic and her comments and stories will resonate with us all for a very long time.

Executive Director & Private Secretary, Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba

Kim Campbell ... has the rare gift of presenting very complex issues in an accessible style without ever diminishing the power of the ideas and importance of the concepts she is presenting.

Nancy R. Smith

Director of Initiatives, Salzburg Global Seminar

Kim Campbell has a remarkable gift of clarity. She speaks with knowledge, passion and honesty on a wide array of complex issues-from global warming to international affairs-while keeping the very human impact of these larger themes front and center.

President & CEO, Chicago Public Library Foundation

Kim Campbell's stature as a global leader never overshadows her connection with an audience, regardless of the size. They always feel like they've been personally engaged and inspired.

Dean, UCLA School of Public Affairs